



BEING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER: EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOL HEADS AND THE REALITIES FACED

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to know the perceptions of the school heads regarding 'which all qualities do they think are mandatory to be present in an effective teacher' and find out which all qualities were present in the teachers teaching in their schools. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from the heads. Both government and private school heads were selected for the present study. Self constructed questionnaire was administered to the school heads along with the structured interviews. The results showed that there were many qualities which were perceived by the heads to be present in the effective teachers but they were found to be lacking in the teachers teaching in their schools. The study aimed to know the gaps between which qualities are required as an effective teacher and what qualities do they actually possess as perceived by the heads of the schools.

Introduction

Teachers are the greatest assets of any education system. They stand at the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values to students. They are accepted as the backbone of education system. Only an effective teacher can help in bringing out the best from students. Gone are the days when one found the tendency to treat the art of teaching as that of stuffing pupils with knowledge. Modern teaching takes a more transparent view of its function. It focuses on how students want to learn and develop their potentialities. It seeks to nurture and direct children's inherent energies in the service of their own development.

Review of related literature

Collins (1990), while working with the Teacher Assessment Project established five criteria for an effective teacher: (a) is committed to students and learning, (b) knows the subject matter, (c) is responsible for managing students, (d) can think systematically about their own practice, and (e) is a member of the learning community.

Various other researchers such as McCabe (1995), Marsh and Roche (1997), Stronge (2002) & Rudduck and Flutter (2004) concluded that students' perceive good teachers as:

1. Human, accessible, reliable and persistent;
2. Respectful of students and sensitive to their difficulties;
3. Enthusiastic and positive; and
4. Professionally skilled.

These attributes are of relative importance to the teachers because they are required to nurture and direct children's inherent energies and potentialities.

In the previous researches conducted on attributes of an effective teacher. The four main attributes of effective teachers have been reported: dynamism, communication, rapport and applied knowledge are apparent in the literature, but there is less understanding of their relative importance. For example, in two of the qualitative studies (Patrick & Smart, 1998; Faranda & Clarke, 2004) and certain quantitative studies (Marks, 2000; Desai, Damewood and Jones (2001), rapport, or treating students as equals and with respect, was found to be what students most desired from academicians. However, in the case of Reid and Johnston (1999), clarity of communication followed by the ability to generate interest was most important to students, and being approachable had a relatively low importance. Other quantitative studies (Grunenwald & Ackerman, 1986; Smart et al., 2003) also found communication to be more important than rapport.

Some of the attributes of teacher effectiveness are innate in teachers but there are some attributes which have to be inculcated amongst the teachers through teacher education. In fact, the innate teaching attributes also need to be polished. Experiences of various researchers who conducted researches in various countries reveal that the most effective way to develop good teachers in a dynamic and changing environment is to begin with a well developed pre-service teacher education program and continue with career long learning opportunities. Each society, therefore, makes some provision for pre-service education and continuous professional development of teachers in order to help them contribute in the growth of society.

Moreover, there is ample empirical research evidence to suggest that students' achievement is significantly related to the professional preparation of teachers

(Darling- Hammond, 2001; Ferguson, 1991a; Goe, 2002; Goldhaber and Brewer, 2000). The European Commission Report 'Communication on Teacher Education' (2007) in the very beginning observes 'research shows that teacher quality is significantly and positively correlated with pupil attainment and it is the most important within school aspect explaining students' performance.

Purpose of the study

The researcher intended to know about the qualities which school principals perceived to be:

1. Indispensable for being an effective teacher.
2. Exist/lack in the teachers teaching in their schools

Along with this, questions were framed for semi-structured interviews regarding what changes they think should be brought in the curriculum of B.Ed. so as to produce effective teachers.

For preparing the questionnaire, the researcher formulated statements regarding the qualities of effective teachers. The items were based on following broad aspects:

1. **Pedagogical awareness:** This aspect focused on items which pertained to knowledge about content/subject matter in context of facilitating student learning. The items included: knowledge of teachers regarding the content to be taught, knowledge about various methods to be used while teaching, linking knowledge across various subjects, using various resources to teach and plan challenging lessons and focusing on the school curriculum.
2. **Teaching effectiveness:** Teaching effectiveness refers to how effectively a teacher taught in classroom. Therefore the items included were based on using variety of methods to teach one topic, teaching according to the needs of the learner, use of student centered approach rather than teacher centered, enabling students to use their learning in real life situations, involving students actively in the process of learning, evoking critical thinking among students and teaching effectively through latest technology.
3. **Guidance and counseling skills:** this aspect aimed to check whether the teachers had knowledge and skills to provide guidance to students at various stages and provide counseling services whenever required. The items related to the knowledge of teachers regarding: imparting preventive guidance to adolescents, stress management techniques, building effective interpersonal relationships and motivating students to achieve their aims were included.
4. **Outer personality:** The items pertaining to outer personality of teacher were included based on: dressing up of teachers, ways of communicating with the students, possessing of general knowledge of teachers and maintenance of decorum of being a teacher.
5. **Knowledge regarding inclusive education and contemporary issues:** It aimed to check whether the teachers were able to 1) identify differently abled children and deal with them efficiently in the classroom and 2) keep themselves updated regarding the latest issues and policies on education.

A total of 31 items were framed to know the perceptions of school principals about qualities which are indispensable in a teacher. The respondents were requested to mark their opinions in the response categories given in the questionnaire. In first response category, the respondents had to mark their opinion regarding whether the specific aspect was 1) Indispensable or optional to be present in an effective teacher. If the specific aspect was 'indispensable', 'I' had to be marked and if it perceived to be optional it was supposed to be marked as 'O'. In the second response category, the respondents had to mark their opinion regarding whether the specific aspect was present in the majority of teachers teaching in their schools or not. If the specific aspect was present in the majority of the teachers teaching in their school, they were supposed to mark 'P' otherwise 'L' for lacking of that trait.

Along with this, there were two questions framed for semi-structured interview:

1. Does B.Ed. curriculum include all that is required to prepare the teachers with desirable attributes?
2. What changes do they think should be brought in the curriculum of B.Ed. in order to produce more effective teachers?

After selection of the items, the validity of the questionnaire was found. For this purpose, a group of experts was selected to rate the items for its validity. In this process, all the items were retained where few items were modified according to the opinions of the experts.

Sample and methodology

Convenient sampling technique was used to select the heads of the schools. The self-constructed questionnaire was administered to 27 school principals (government and private) to know their perceptions regarding effective teachers. Various attributes/skills/qualities were enlisted in the questionnaire and the school principals were asked to respond on all the attributes. The principals were asked to respond on each item in terms of its requirement for being an effective teacher and also if the same is present in the teachers teaching in their schools. They were asked to mention 'Yes' if they perceived that a particular attribute/skill/quality is indispensable to be present in an effective teacher. They were also asked to mention whether the specific attribute/skill/quality is present in the teachers teaching in their schools or not. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the principals to know their perceptions regarding the aspects they perceived should be included in the B.Ed. curriculum. Content analysis was carried for the responses given by the principals.

Results and discussion

The responses of the principals were converted into percentages for easy comprehension. On the basis of the responses of the principals, gaps were determined between what is required and is present in reality among teachers.

The table 5.3.1 below clearly shows the responses (in terms of percentages) of the principals regarding the aspects mentioned.

Table 5.3.1 showing the percentages of all the attributes and the difference in the expectations of the principals regarding attributes of effective teachers and attributes present in the teachers teaching them

Attributes	Required attribute (%)	Already present (%)	Difference
1. Subject Mastery	100	84	16
2. Deep understanding of Pedagogy	100	76	24
3. Technocracy	84	30	54*
4. Managerial skills	94	92	2
5. Resourcefulness	94	22	72*
6. Knowledge about variety of teaching methods	96	34	62*
7. Rich General Knowledge	92	24	68*
8. Ability to plan lessons in such a way that challenge the students to think.	96	38	58*
9. Enable the students to use their learning in real life situations	98	48	50
10. Ability to teach according to needs of learners	98	42	56*
11. Focus on school curriculum	100	98	2
12. Emphasize the students for marks than behavior	12	96	-84*
13. Use constructivist approach	76	22	54*
14. Evoke critical thinking among students	90	64	26

15. Uses Motivational strategies for helping students to achieve to their maximum potential	92	38	54*
16. Know stress management techniques and help student to manage their stresses	82	56	26
17. Have skills to impart preventive guidance to adolescents	78	32	46
18. Ability to deal with delinquent behaviors	92	20	72*
19. Effective communication skills	100	42	58*
20. Charismatic Personality	84	92	-8
21. Creativity	100	74	26
22. Counseling Skills	100	78	22
23. Ability to establish good interpersonal relationship	100	68	32
24. Adequate knowledge about contemporary educational policies and issues.	94	52	42
25. Ability to conduct activities and evaluate those for CCE	100	58	42
26. Able to deal or teach differently-abled children.	100	20	80*
27. Ethical conduct	100	84	16
28. Understand group dynamics in classroom	80	96	-16
29. Ability to give remedial help through individualized attention while teaching.	98	62	36
30. Assess the students continuously during the course of teaching.	84	68	16
31. Able to encourage interdisciplinary linkages across different subjects.	92	52	40

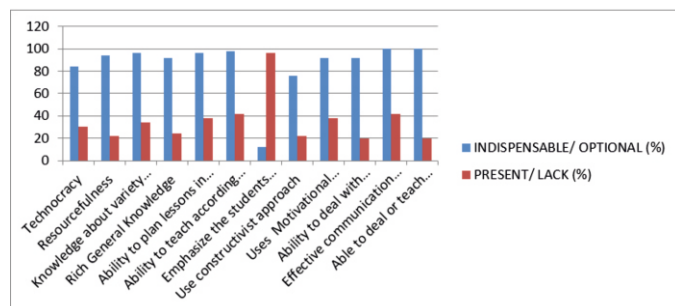
*shows large difference in the expectations of the parents regarding attributes of effective teachers and attributes present in the teachers teaching in their schools.

From the table above it is clear that there were certain attributes which were perceived to be indispensable to be present in teachers by 100% of the principals chosen as a sample. These attributes were: mastery of teacher over her subject, deep understanding of pedagogy, focusing on school curriculum, effective communication skills, counseling skills, creativity of a teacher, maintaining good interpersonal relationships, able to deal with differently abled children and ethical conduct of the teacher. A large percentage of principals (around 90%) perceived that an effective teacher is one who enables students to use their learning in real life situations, have ability to teach according to needs of learner, have adequate knowledge about various contemporary issues, use motivational strategies in classroom, able to evoke critical thinking among students and able to deal with delinquent behavior of children. All the other attributes were perceived to be present in the teachers by around 80% of the principals. They were: efficient use of technology, assessing the students continuously during the course of teaching, having charismatic personality, knowing stress management techniques and helping students to manage their stress, having skills to impart preventive guidance to adolescents and using constructivist approach in classroom.

With regard to existence of attributes being present in the teachers as perceived by principals; there were four attributes for which around 90% of the principals perceived that they were present in their teachers. Those included: focusing on school curriculum, emphasizing students just for marks than behavior, understanding group dynamics in classroom and possessing managerial skills. There were only two attributes i.e. having subject mastery and ethical conduct of the teachers which were possessed by around 80% of the principals to be present in the teachers. There were six attributes which were perceived by 60-70% of the principals to be present in their teachers. Those included: possessing counseling skills, deep understanding of the pedagogy, creativity, assessing students continuously during the session and able to establish good interpersonal relationship. There were only four attributes which were perceived to be present in teachers by around 50% of the principals. Those attributes were: ability to conduct activities and evaluate those for CCE, knowledge about stress management techniques, adequate knowledge about contemporary educational policies and issue and able to encourage interdisciplinary linkages across different subjects. Rest all the attributes were perceived to be present in the teachers by less than 50% of the principals. These attributes included: enabling students to use their learning in real

life situations (48%), ability to teach according to the needs of the students (42%), effective communication skills (42%), ability to plan lessons in such a way that enables students to think (38%), able to use motivational strategies for helping students to achieve their maximum potential (38%), knowledge about variety of teaching methods (34%), having skills to impart preventive guidance to adolescents (32%), efficient use of technology (30%), rich general knowledge (24%), resourceful (22%), use constructivist approach (22%), ability to deal with delinquent behavior (20%) and ability to teach differently abled children (20%). The graph 5.3.1 below shows the attributes in which large difference has been calculated in the expectations of the principals regarding attributes of effective teachers and attributes present in the teachers teaching them.

Graph 5.3.1 shows the attributes in which large difference has been calculated in the expectations of the principals regarding attributes of effective teachers



The table 5.3.1 and the graph 5.3.1 clearly depict that:

- 84% of the school principals perceived that an effective teacher should have knowledge about the latest technology but only 30% of the principals perceived that this knowledge was present in the teachers teaching in their schools.
- Almost all the principals (94%) stated that an effective teacher should be resourceful but only 22% of the principals felt that the teachers teaching in their schools are resourceful.
- It is indispensable for an effective teacher to use variety of teaching methods as perceived by 96% of the principals. A huge difference was seen when the principals reported that only according to them only 34% of the teachers possess this attribute.
- While giving their perceptions about possessing rich general knowledge, 92% of the principals perceived that it is indispensable attribute which an effective teacher should possess but it was shocking to know that only 24% of the principals perceived that the teachers teaching in their schools possess this attribute.
- Almost all the principals (98%) perceived that an effective teacher should enable students to use their learning in real life situations but even less than half percentage (48%) of principals perceived that the teachers teaching in their schools could do it.
- A large percentage (98%) of principals reported that an effective teacher should be able to teach according to the needs of the learner but only 52% of the principals reported that teachers teaching in their schools taught in this manner.
- Just a few percentage (12%) of principals had a view point that a teacher should focus on marks of student rather than behavior but a large percentage of principals (96%) reported that teachers teaching in their schools emphasized on marks rather than emphasizing on their behavior.
- A fair percentage of principals (76%) perceived that an effective teacher should use constructivist approach in their classrooms but only a few principals (22%) reported that the teachers teaching in their schools were able to teach in a manner that the students were able to construct knowledge by their own.
- A large percentage of principals (82%) stated that a teacher should be able to inculcate ways of stress management to students in their class but only 56% of the principals perceived that teachers taught ways of stress management to their students.
- A large percentage of principals reported that an effective teacher should be able to deal with delinquents but only 20% of the principals reported that the teachers teaching in their schools were able to deal with such students.
- The entire percentage (100%) of the principals believed that an effective teacher should be able to identify, deal and teach differently abled children but a very few percentage (20%) believed that teachers teaching in their

schools were able to do it.

5.3.2 Content analysis was done for the responses given by the principals for the questions asked in the structured interviews.

5.3.2.1 The open ended question asked in the questionnaire from the principals was:

1. Does B.Ed. curriculum include all that is required to prepare the teachers with desirable attributes?

- There was not even a single principal who reported that the curriculum of B.Ed. included all that was required to prepare the teachers with desirable attributes.
- Rather there were majority of the principals (21) who reported that they fail to understand what teachers learn during their B.Ed. course. They reported that the novice teachers have to be trained regarding classroom management, how to plan their lessons and even how to deal with children. Though, the B.Ed. course trains them in preparing their lesson plans and they deliver 40 lesson plans for each subject during their teaching practice, still they are unable to prepare lessons according to the needs of the learner when they enter real classroom teaching.
- Many principals (17) reported that the fault lies in the curriculum of the B.Ed. They reported that the curriculum is not upgraded according to the contemporary issues in education. Therefore the teachers lack in the knowledge of those areas when they enter real teaching.
- There was one principal who spoke, 'For some areas, B.Ed. curriculum does not provide efficient training and for others, there is a casual approach followed by the teachers. I fail to understand whom to be blamed? -The curriculum of B.Ed. or the attitude of teachers towards teaching?' She had a view point that for certain areas where they are trained to prepare their lessons in advance before entering the class, they exhibit a very casual approach, where they are seen teaching from the text books in classroom. Same approach is continued even though they have been told repeatedly to use various techniques while teaching.

2. What changes do they think should be brought in the curriculum of B.Ed. in order to produce more effective teachers?

- Many principals (18) reported that there are certain technology centered areas where the teachers are not being trained properly. These areas included, training regarding effective use of ICT, e- learning and use of computers for basic work. These skills are important to be inculcated due to the changing roles of today's teachers.
- There were certain principals (15) who believed that the teachers lack in basic communication skills. They are not able to transact knowledge to the students in an effective way. Not only this, due to lack in communication skills they are not able to build interpersonal relationships with students and even parents. They believed that these skills are very important while a teacher has to transact knowledge to the students, build healthy relationships with the students, and deal with parents, address students and parents for various issues.
- A fair number of principals (12) also reported that teachers are given no training to identify the differently abled children and teach them. As child's right to inclusive education is widely recognized as international human rights law, it is imperative for teacher training bodies to train pupil teachers for the same.
- Some of the principals (12) perceived that in order to make the curriculum more effective, the duration and seriousness of the teaching practice should be increased. The teachings of pupil teachers should be properly supervised by the supervisor because this is the time when they can learn how to make their teaching more effective, how different teaching methods can be used to teach different topic, how to do classroom management, how to deal with students in a better manner. If the training provided to the pupil teachers is effective, they would face fewer problems when they join their jobs.
- The same number of principals (12) wrote that the curriculum of B.Ed. is not up to date. The laws which have been stated and implemented by the government, recent documents proposed by the government, new evaluation system enforced by CBSE etc. have not been included in the curriculum so far.
- Few principals (9) perceived that training should be given regarding various techniques of teaching, pedagogical issues, how to make teaching more creative and how to prepare lessons more challenging so that a student is made to think not just take in.
- One of the principal spoke that proper training should be given how to deliver knowledge about 'sex education' in the classroom. She was of the view that giving right education to students at proper age may reduce crime.

Awareness should also be given to the parents regarding the same so that they can also educate their wards.

- The same principal was of a view that a teacher should be trained to deliver career talks in school. A teacher should be trained enough to give vocational education to the students.
- Another principal spoke that pupil teacher should be trained in different areas such as understanding child's psychology, planning lessons before going to class and moral values. They should also be trained to organize different co-curricular activities in school.
- Principal of one more school spoke in the interview that a pupil teachers should be trained for moral values, activity based curriculum, understanding child's psychology, keeping in mind the family background of a child and ways of counseling the students in different areas.

Conclusion

There are many attributes which the principals perceive should be present in the teachers teaching in their schools such as: thorough knowledge about the subject, being techno savvy, understanding the child's psychology, catering to individual differences, knowledge about inclusive education and contemporary issues but such qualities were found to be missing in the teachers teaching in their schools. As the effective preparation of teachers is the responsibility of the teacher education programme, therefore the programme should be revised to produce effective teachers who can meet the expectations of the principals.

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